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TERROR RESORT

by Brett Halliday

*It was a terrible place to visit, and Mike Shayne
didn't want to die there. But if certain people had
their way, that's exactly what the big redheaded
Miami detective would do! 4*

NOVELET

THE LEGACY
Alan Warren 28

SHORT STORIES

THE PLAYHOUSE MURDERS
Hal Charles 48

THE GEM SHOW
R. Tuttle 65

THE PERFECT CRIME REVISITED
Terry Black 76

THE OTHER SIDE
C. Bruce Hunter 78

THE DEEP POCKET
David Linzee 80

STAKEOUT
Dan J. Marlowe 91

THE MURDER OF MR. EXCITEMENT
Michael Avallone 102

MORNING SONG
Betty Ren Wright 111

COMMUNITY EFFORT
Wade Mosby 115

THE METHOD
Jackie Ritchie 119

THE IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE
Patty Matthews 122

TERRORIST
Edward D. Hoch 126

SPECIAL FEATURE

STIFF COMPETITION (Book Reviews)
John Ball 108

No one in the organization could do the job. It required an outsider — someone who would not be bothered by the bizarre method of execution!

The Method

by JACKIE RITCHIE

IT WAS AGREED THAT WE HAD TO GET RID OF VITO ROZSA and the assignment was given to me because I knew where I could get the man to do the job.

Julius Antonucci sighed as he gazed at the others gathered at the long table. "I just don't understand Vito. He seems to have no respect for anybody else's territory. His piece of the city is every bit as good as any one of ours, but he not only admits raiding, he seems to glory in it and dares us to do anything about it."

I concurred. "If we don't police ourselves, who will? We have to get rid of Vito once and for all. We should never have recruited him in the first place. We'll have to be more careful in the future."

However exterminating Vito might present something of a problem. I could not do the work myself. Neither could anyone in the organization. In this case, the matter would have to be handled by an outsider and I thought that I had the man.

Joseph Mathias. He was something of a giant, perhaps six foot-five and dull-witted. He had managed to get his picture in the newspapers a number of times, usually in connection with murder investigations, but he had never yet been jailed.

After our meeting adjourned, I went back home and changed to a sports jacket and slacks. I also put on a bow tie.

IT WAS NEARLY MIDNIGHT WHEN I ARRIVED AT MATHIAS' apartment. I pressed the buzzer at his door and waited.

When Mathias answered, he was in pajamas. Evidently he had been sleeping. His eyes were hostile. "What the hell is it?"

I smiled slightly. "I have a job for you. One which will pay you well. Very well."

His eyes narrowed. "What kind of a job?"

"A few minutes of work. Just the sort of thing at which you excell."

He let me into the room. "I'm listening."

I told him what I wanted done, though not yet why or how.

He appeared interested, but still wary. "Why come to me?"

"Let us not play," I said. "I know you will do the job. It pays ten thousand dollars. Five now and five after you have completed the assignment."

He studied me. "Just who are you?"

"It isn't at all necessary that you know."

"Is this a syndicate job?"

"We prefer to think of ourselves as an extended family." I removed an envelope from my pocket and handed it to him.

He counted the fifty one hundred dollar bills enclosed. "All right. Any particular time? Maybe you want to line up an alibi or something?"

"We think that noon tomorrow would be most appropriate." I gave him Vito's address. "You will find him in his apartment. He will be drugged and in a coma."

"Drugged?"

I lied again. "Yes." And then I told the truth. "He will be unconscious and offer no resistance."

"Who's going to drug him?"

"That does not concern you, but it will be done."

"If he's going to be unconscious, why can't you do the job yourself? Why shell out ten thousand bucks to hire me?"

"Let us say that for sentimental reasons, none of us can bring ourselves to commit the act. After all, he is a member of the organization."

And then I told him how Vito was to be terminated.

He blinked. "You're kidding."

"Not at all. I, of course, was against anything so barbaric. However one does not argue with the man who sits at the head of the table once he has made his decision."

Mathias stared at me and possibly a vagrant suspicion crossed his mind. If it did, my attire, especially the bow tie, probably dispelled it.

He shrugged. "If that's the way you want it done, that's the way I'll do it. But it's crazy."

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THE NEXT EVENING AT TEN, I WENT TO VITO'S APARTMENT on the nineteenth floor of the Tannhauser building. I pressed the buzzer at his door. There was no answer.

I used the set of keys with which I had provided myself and finally found one which allowed me to enter. I went to Vito's bedroom.

Yes, Mathias had done his job well. Probably just one blow. I doubted very much that Mathias could have brought himself to strike another.

I could picture what had happened. There had been a shriek, of course. Certainly Vito would not have gone easily. I shuddered.

And where would I find Mathias now? In his apartment waiting for the second five thousand dollars? I rather doubted that.

No. When he realized what he had actually done, I think that he must have been filled with horror. He had probably decided to put as much distance between himself and the organization as he could and gone into hiding.

I gathered what was left of Vito in the bedsheet and dumped it down the hall incinerator chute — along with the wooden stake, the mallet, and the tobacco pouch containing four ounces of Vito's native soil.

In the old days, an entire coffin and pounds of earth would have been considered necessary. However we have discovered that a few ounces tucked under one's pillow is quite sufficient to see one safely through the day.

I went to the end of the hall, opened a window, and flew the direct route home.

